

Apprehensions of Unauthorized Migrants along the Southwest Border: Fact Sheet

May 2, 2014

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

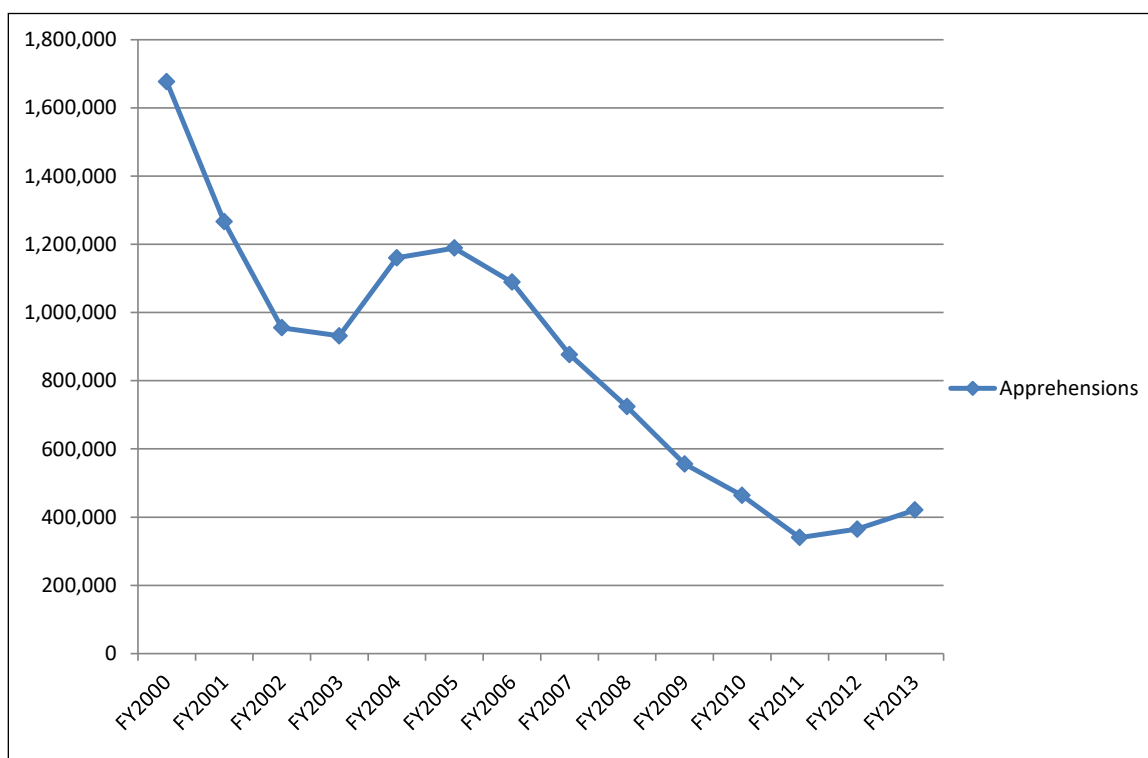
R43523

According to the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP), the number of illegal alien¹ apprehensions² between southern ports of entry (POE)³ in the United States has generally declined from about 1.6 million in FY2000 to nearly 420,000 in FY2013. Much of this downward trend has occurred since FY2005. Apprehensions of unauthorized migrants by the USBP along the U.S.-Mexico border fell from about 1.2 million in FY2005 to a 41-year low of 328,000 in FY2011, before climbing to 357,000 in FY2012 and 414,397 in FY2013.

Trends in Apprehensions between Ports of Entry (POE)

Figure 1 shows the annual total number of apprehensions that occurred along the Southwest border between FY2000 and FY2013.

Figure 1. Apprehensions of Unauthorized Migrants by U.S. Border Patrol along the U.S. Southwest Border, FY2000–FY2013



Source: USBP, Total Illegal Alien Apprehensions by Fiscal Year, <http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/U.S.%20Border%20Patrol%20Fiscal%20Year%20Apprehension%20Statistics%20by%20sector%20and%20border%20area.pdf>.

Figure 1 shows an overall decline of 75% in apprehensions along the Southwest border between FY2000 and FY2013. Between FY2000 and FY2003, apprehensions along the Southwest border

¹ An alien is any person not a citizen or national of the United States. Unauthorized aliens are aliens who are not permitted to enter the United States.

² The arrest of a removable alien, <https://www.dhs.gov/definition-terms>

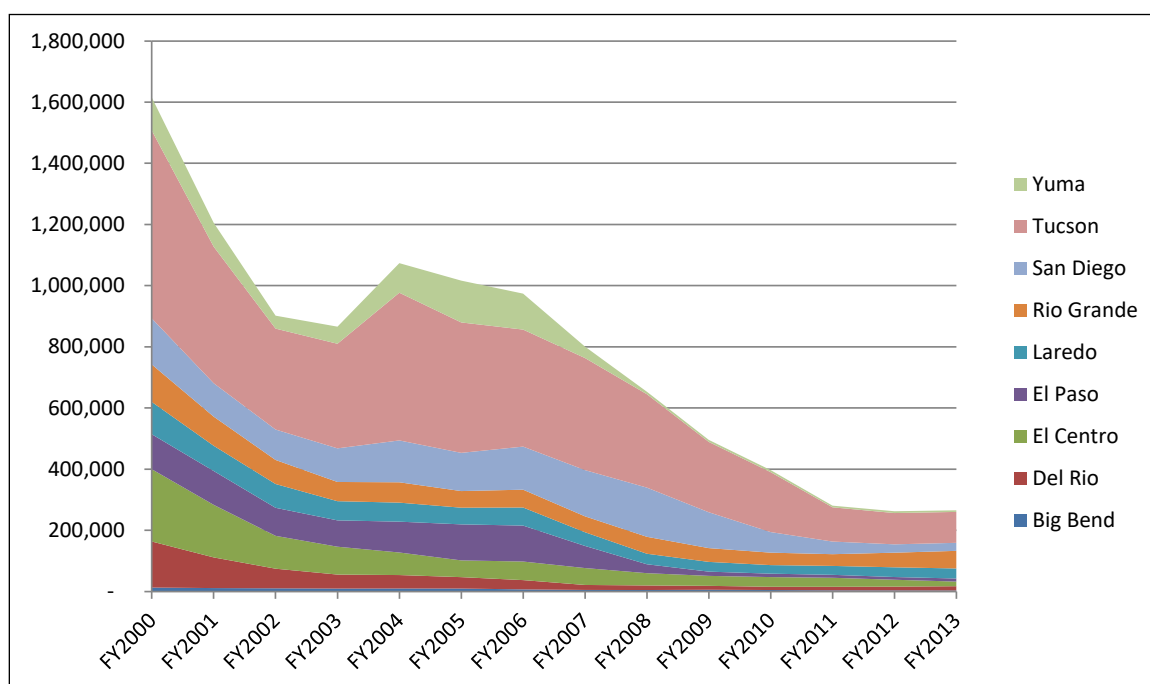
³ Any location in the United States or its territories that is designated as a point of entry for aliens and U.S. citizens, Ibid.

declined by 45%, before increasing in FY2004. The largest yearly increase (26%) during the period examined occurred between FY2003 and FY2004. Southwest border apprehensions began to decline mid-decade, dropping by 8% between FY2005 and FY2006. They fell more rapidly between FY2006 and FY2011, by an average of 14% each year. Since FY2011, apprehensions increased by 26%. Falling apprehensions likely reflect lower illegal inflows since 2006, though the degree to which reduced inflows are a result of effective enforcement by the USBP versus other factors, like the recent U.S. economic downturn, remains subject to debate.⁴

Apprehensions of Mexican Nationals

Figure 2, which depicts the apprehension trend of Mexican nationals from Southwest border patrol sectors,⁵ trends similarly to **Figure 1** largely because Mexican nationals comprise a large proportion of the total apprehensions for the time period examined. Overall apprehensions of Mexican nationals declined by 84% from FY2000 to FY2013.

Figure 2. Trend in Apprehensions of Unauthorized Mexican Migrants by Southwest Border Patrol Sector, FY2000–FY2013



Source: USBP, Total Illegal Alien Apprehensions from Mexico by Fiscal Year, <http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/U.S.%20Border%20Patrol%20Fiscal%20Year%20Apprehension%20Statistics%20by%20sector%20and%20border%20area.pdf>.

Overall apprehensions of unauthorized Mexican migrants declined by 46% from FY2000 to FY2003, before rising in FY2004. From FY2003 to FY2004, there was a 24% increase in apprehensions, the largest overall increase during the time period examined. Following this spike, overall numbers declined gradually, by approximately 6% each year, between FY2004 and

⁴ See CRS Report R42138, *Border Security: Immigration Enforcement Between Ports of Entry*, by Lisa Seghetti.

⁵ A border patrol sector is any one of 21 geographic areas into which the United States is divided for the Department of Homeland Security's Border Patrol activities, <https://www.dhs.gov/definition-terms#top>.

FY2007. These numbers decreased even more, by about 13% per year, between FY2007 and FY2011. They decreased by 5% from FY2011 to FY2013.

The largest decrease in Mexican national apprehensions between FY2000 and FY2013 occurred at the Yuma sector, which declined by 95% during this time period. Other sectors that experienced a decline in apprehensions during the time period examined included El Centro (94%), El Paso (92%), and Del Rio (91%). The smallest decline in apprehensions during this period occurred at the Rio Grande Valley sector, which experienced a 53% drop from FY2000 to FY2013.

Apprehensions of Nationals from Countries other than Mexico⁶

Figure 3 illustrates the number of apprehensions of nationals from countries other than Mexico that occurred along the Southwest border patrol sectors between FY2000 and FY2013. The total number of apprehensions of this population along these border patrol sectors has fluctuated from FY2000 to FY2013, with the greatest number of unauthorized migrants *mostly* coming from Western hemisphere countries.⁷

Figure 3 shows that from FY2000 to FY2002, the apprehension numbers of nationals from countries other than Mexico remained steady at about 28,000. From FY2002 to FY2005, these apprehensions increased significantly, by an overall percentage of 452% (127,000 apprehensions); the largest one-year growth within that period was an increase of 135% from FY2004 to FY2005. Apprehensions of nationals from countries other than Mexico steadily declined from FY2005 to FY2009, by 71%. They then increased by 12% in FY2010 before declining once again in FY2011 by 7%. Apprehensions increased significantly, by 217%, from FY2011 to FY2013. The most recent spike in apprehensions can be attributed to an increase in nationals coming from three Western hemisphere nations.⁸

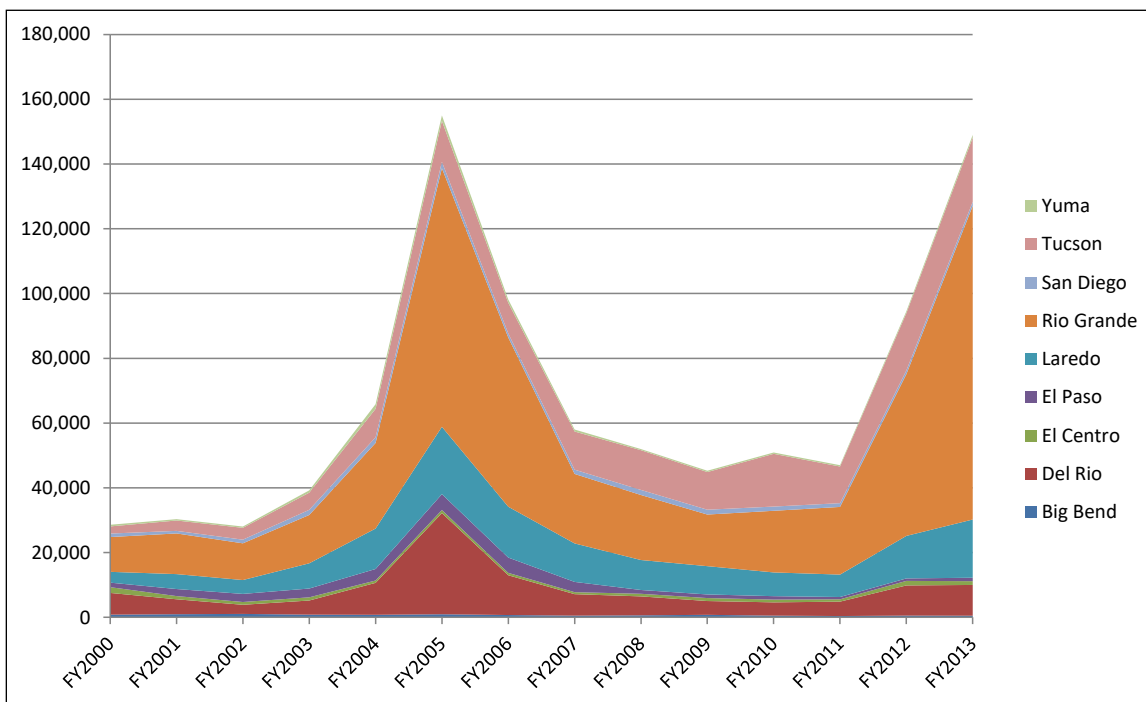
The largest individual Southwest border patrol sector increase over the time period analyzed occurred in the Tucson sector, where apprehensions of nationals from countries other than Mexico increased by 802%. Other sectors to experience overall increases in these apprehensions since FY2000 include the Rio Grande Valley (801%), Laredo (440%), Yuma (60%), Del Rio (42%), and San Diego (18%). The remaining sectors experienced an overall decline in apprehensions of nationals from countries other than Mexico, with Big Bend decreasing by 39%, El Centro by 35%, and El Paso by 24%.

⁶ The Department of Homeland Security refers to nationals from countries other than Mexico as “Other than Mexicans” (OTMs).

⁷ Correspondence from CBP Office of Congressional Affairs, April 21, 2014.

⁸ El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Figure 3. Trend in Apprehensions of Nationals from Countries Other than Mexico by Southwest Border Patrol Sector, FY2000-FY2013



Source: USBP, Illegal Alien Apprehensions from Countries Other than Mexico by Fiscal Year, <http://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/U.S.%20Border%20Patrol%20Fiscal%20Year%20Apprehension%20Statistics%20by%20sector%20and%20border%20area.pdf>.

Note: The scale of 0-180,000, with intervals of 20,000, is used on the y-axis for this figure, which is different from the scale of 0-1.8 million, with intervals of 200,000, that is used for **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**. This is due to the higher number of apprehensions of nationals from Mexico, which numbered into the *millions* for several years, as opposed to the apprehensions of nationals from countries other than Mexico, which reached a peak in 2005 of nearly 155,000 apprehensions.

Author Information

Lisa Seghetti
Section Research Manager

Daniel Durak
Research Associate

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.